



**ALBANIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (AIIS)**

## **Albanian Brain Drain: Turning the Tide**

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Lead Author  
Eno Trimçev

Researchers  
Elda Dakli, Sabina Ymeri, Eno Trimçev

Survey Design and Implementation  
Elda Dakli

Editors  
Gjergji Vurmo and Elda Dakli

Data Entry  
Blerina Gjeka, Mavis Bajollari, Dorina Mucollari

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Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS)  
Rr. “Deshmoret e 4 Shkurtit,” Nr. 7/1, Tirana, Albania  
Tel: +355 42 488 53 Fax: + 355 4 270 337  
E-mail: [aiis@aiis-albania.org](mailto:aiis@aiis-albania.org)  
Website: <http://www.aiis-albania.org>

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## **Abstract**

This paper argues that the process of turning Albanian “brain drain” into “brain circulation” is not only desirable but also entirely possible. The professional integration of foreign-educated Albanian students in state institutions requires, first and foremost, the consolidation of a civil service that is insulated from its socio-political environment, endowed with a clear decision-making and implementation hierarchy, and whose behavior is governed by universal, transparent and accountable codes of conduct. Advancing the reforms in this field may help create a virtuous circle of stronger institutions capable of attracting better skilled labor that, in its turn, aids institutional strength. Given the satisfactory level of public awareness on the issue of brain drain, the number of civil society and government initiatives dedicated to reverse the phenomenon as well as the enormity of the task, the paper argues that a carefully-designed strategy including government, businesses and civil society will yield the required results in the long-term.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the last fifteen years of Albania's transition to democracy, emigration has become one of the main socio-economic issues facing Albanian society. However, not only has the problem garnered relatively little attention by policy-makers, but its conceptualization has suffered from a lack of clarity and generalizations. Generally speaking, mass migration, brain drain, and temporary sojourns abroad for educational purposes are lumped together under the concept "emigration" thus complicating the efforts of social and political actors to deal with the different facets relating to the outflow of labor from Albania. This paper aims to clarify the differences between these concepts, focus on brain drain and spell out specific recommendations necessary for transforming "brain drain" into "brain circulation." The paper uses research of local and international sources on brain drain as well as the results from a survey of Albanian students that are currently studying abroad or have returned to Albania after completing their studies abroad. They are the target group of the AIIS *Back to Albania* programme.

AIIS decided to contribute to the brain drain debate at this time for two main reasons: (1) the brain drain phenomenon is hindering more and more Albania's economic growth and the strengthening of state institutions, and; (2) not only has the brain drain issue been debated extensively in the media but, in the last few years, a number of well-publicized civil society initiatives as well as a government strategy has been put into place to deal with the phenomenon. Thus, the time for public awareness campaigns has passed and the Albanian body politic is taking active steps to ameliorate the impact of skilled labor migration. AIIS feels that it is at this juncture that its technical expertise can be most helpful in the informed public policy debates on the issue.

From this point of view, this policy paper is but a first step of the AIIS programme. It serves to lay out the findings of our research and to ground our vision for the future. AIIS plans to continue the *Back to Albania* programme that, we hope, one day will culminate on the set up of a Return Promotion Center managed by foreign-educated students that have returned to Albania. If successful, the Center will:

- Promote the return of Albanians educated abroad.
- Bring together the community of foreign-educated Albanians that have already returned.
- Provide logistical, informational and advocacy support for foreign educated Albanians as they try to reintegrate in Albanian life.

AIIS is currently in the process of looking for partners and donors interested in this project. In the meantime, AIIS will continue to do research, expand its database of Albanians educated abroad and administer the *Back to Albania* survey.

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Emigration has been one of the hottest social issues in post-1990 Albania. Emigration rates—from rural to urban areas and from Albania to other countries—have been the highest in Eastern Europe. From a positive perspective, emigration has acted as a relief valve on deteriorating economic conditions, remittances have been key to controlling the country's negative balance of payments, while returning migrants have provided invaluable expertise in different professions. On the other hand, the loss of skilled labor, the overburdened infrastructure of urban areas and the depopulation of sections of the countryside stand witness to the social havoc wreaked by this phenomenon. Within the massive emigration flows of this period, “brain drain” has materialized as a particularly important factor hampering the creation of a high-skilled labor market that matches Albania's needs. This paper will analyze the characteristics of Albanian brain drain and map out policies that may mitigate the outflow of high-skilled labor as well as increase the rate of return of Albanians studying abroad.

Albania is at an important juncture for its development. For the first time since 1992, the country is experiencing a peaceful democratic rotation of power—an important step towards the consolidation of procedural democracy. Satisfactory macroeconomic indicators for the transition period mean that Albania has left the emergency period behind and is now faced with increasingly sophisticated development issues that require highly specialized and differentiated responses. The mixed report cards on the process of integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures continuously point to the need of strengthening the administrative and technical aspects of governance. Weaknesses in institutional capacities have emerged as the primary barrier in the road to integration. Existing human resources are poorly utilized and even more poorly cultivated. The resulting stagnation in the field of human resources has negatively impacted the quality of the labor market, public debate, social openness, and institutional capacities to formulate and implement proper development policies and projects. One tool that would be effective in changing this situation is a national strategy on attracting foreign-educated Albanians in the civil service, education system and the private sector.

The first section of the paper will set out its analytical framework. Post communist emigration will be divided in three non-temporal waves: first, 1991-1992 and 1997-1998 was composed of people fleeing *en masse* from deteriorating economic and security conditions. All population groups participated in the first wave and, although some were highly educated, most members of this group left Albania with no intention to return. They are excluded from our target group. The second wave stretches out from the end of the emergency situation in 1992 to the implosion of the Albanian state in 1997 and from 1998 till today. Members of this group were motivated by economic survival and also have little intention to return. Finally, the third wave—which temporally corresponds to the second wave—was not motivated by the desire to settle in a foreign country but by the yearning for better quality higher education, retraining or gaining professional experience abroad. Members of the third wave took advantage of the opportunities offered by life in a free country to gain a competitive advantage over their peers in their

professions. They are well-educated professionals that travel for a post-doc or work experience and students that finish their university degrees abroad who are most likely to return if offered the opportunity. Mostly young and single, members of this wave make up the target group of our programme.

The survey reveals that a considerable number of Albanians studying abroad are contemplating the possibility of return although few have definitely decided to return upon completion of their diploma requirements. Although income is a concern, it is not the primary concern. Questions relating to the employers' market—work availability, work ethic, subjective hiring/firing practices—were the most important ones when deciding in favor or against returning to Albania. Thus, the constituency for a national strategy on this important segment of the labor force is in place. Moreover, if such a strategy does target effectively the internal organizational rules of the public administration and institutions of higher learning, the survey suggests that the rate of return will increase and the incorporation of high skilled labor in Albanian institutions will be facilitated.

Two key findings materialize from our survey: first, the constituency for a national strategy designed to stimulate the return and integration of the target group exists. A remarkable 42 percent of Albanians currently studying abroad are uncertain whether to return upon completion of their studies. Very few of these respondents have cultural or personal reasons for not returning—that is to say that they are open to being convinced that returning to Albania would be to their benefit. Second, while income is an important factor, it is not the most important factor when deciding if to return to Albania. Most respondents named an unattractive work ethic as the primary reason against returning, while low living standards came second and difficulty to find employment came third. Personal and cultural reasons were not significant except for those that had decided against returning. On the other hand, those that have returned to Albania have done so primarily for career purposes. Although many—but not most—are unhappy with current income levels, the overwhelming majority of returnees are happy that they have returned. Thus, career-related issues are more important than income for both returnees and respondents currently studying abroad. These two findings become important when designing the response to the brain drain phenomenon—rather than focusing on material compensation for returnees employed in public institutions, it would be more effective to strengthen the institutional mechanisms governing internal procedures such as hiring/firing practices, career development etc. The survey suggests that the success of any strategy designed to attract foreign-educated Albanians impinges on creating a more Weberian image of the Albanian state institutions.

All the requirements for a successful national strategy for integrating foreign-educated Albanians in state-run institutions are in place. From the supply side, considerable numbers of the target group are expressing an interest to return, some are returning and most want to work in state-run institutions rather than in the private or non-profit sector. On the demand side, the strengthening of the capacities of the Albanian civil service has emerged as the most daunting challenge in the road to Euro-Atlantic integration. At the very least, such a strategy would be one of the tools that would help enhance the



technical and administrative capacities of the civil service. Finally, social awareness of the brain drain phenomenon has increased significantly in the last few years because of media articles, widespread anecdotal evidence, as well as a number of initiatives by students themselves to facilitate such a return.

The Albanian Government has put into place a strategy that attempts to address the need for incorporating Albanians educated abroad in the civil service. While the Strategy is a welcome development and should pave the way to a better utilization of this resource pool, neither all the necessary legal amendments nor the institutional mechanisms of cooperation with student organization dedicated to the same purpose have been specified. Instead, the task has been left to the public administration alone—a difficult undertaking when it seems that changes in the way the public administration operates are the primary requirement for attracting foreign-educated Albanians back.

### III. Recommendations

As our survey indicates (see Figure 2), most Albanians currently studying abroad would prefer employment in academic institutions. Thus, in order to turn the brain drain into brain circulation, together with the better performance of general government indicators, the Albanian education system needs to become more attractive for potential students as well as professors and researchers:

- Cancel the liberalization of universities. The recent initiative of the lame-duck socialist government to liberalize entry requirements for Albanian universities has thrown higher education in full disarray. The liberalization regime—carried out with no prior internal or external debate, administrative studies or additional funds—has been rightfully condemned by university deans, analysts and intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> Foreign experience shows that the creation of a massive lumpen-intelligentsia does not only hinder a country's development but it creates a ticking social time-bomb because of the large gap between the expectations of the graduates and the capacities of the national economy to absorb them. Although, the prospects for canceling this initiative are relatively bleak given that one of the Democratic Party's main electoral promises was a similar initiative, it is possible to at least increase funding for universities so that they can cope in some way with the increased influx of students. This process will require massive hiring efforts thus presenting an excellent opportunity to incorporate Western-graduated students in the ranks of academic staff.
- Like in other East European countries,<sup>2</sup> Albania needs to set up higher education institutions that provide higher education for business talent at home. The creation of Western style MBA programs that will create a generation of managers for the emerging private sector would be a first step in this regard.
- Break up the hierarchical, immobile, hermetic and gerontocratic system of higher education that exists in Albania's universities. Education reform is very important for increasing the competitiveness of the "supply side" incentives to keep the country's best and brightest home.

Our survey indicates that reforming the civil service in line with EU integration requirements may very well be a more important factor than financial compensation when formulating a strategy of brain circulation. In order to make the option of return more viable or appealing, civil service reform in the following areas is necessary:

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see Blendi Kajsia, "The Liberalization of Universities—A Flight from Reality," *Metropol*, No. 418, August 18, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the EMBA program at the American University in Bulgaria. See Deborah Steinborn, "East Europe Seeks to Stop Brain Drain," *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), New York, N. Y.: March 26, 2003, pg. B.4.E.

- A part of the civil service reform should be to improve public human resource management systems and procedures. It includes the need to design and implement professional human resource policies in all line ministries and state agencies, and significant improvements in the recruitment, performance appraisal, remuneration, training and career development systems and practices, as well as professional ethics of the civil service. In addition, there is a need to analyze and improve the performance appraisal process and to develop the capacities of the managerial level civil servants and especially of the human resource units to apply the process in an effective way. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure a direct link between the institution performance and the performance of its employees.
- Cancel article 13.6 of Law no. 8549 on “The Status of the Civil Servant” that allows supervisors to choose at their discretion one of the top three candidates of the work spot competition. This article has become a source of a great deal of abuse and nepotism and its cancellation would complete the legal framework of a modern, differentiated, insulated and hierarchically-organized bureaucracy that acts according to clear, universal and predictable rules.
- The implementation of a contract system with civil servants, researchers, professors and other highly-skilled employees in the public service that are sent by state institutions abroad on training courses, conferences etc. Such contracts ought to oblige the employee to return to his place of work upon completion of the sojourn abroad.
- Institutionalize cooperation between the Albanian Government and civil society groups that have undertaken similar initiatives to facilitate the creation of a common database with the personal information of Albanian studying abroad as well as the implementation of the other goals of the Strategy.
- Continue the reforms in public administration and governance indicators in close cooperation with the European Union and other international partners. In the end, only the transformation of the public administration toward European standards will be an effective means of incorporating Foreign-educated students in the administration. Of course, this is a two-way street: on-going efforts to incorporate this target group in the administration will help the country’s EU integration in terms of enhancing state capacities to carry out the necessary reforms.
- Decrease the politicization of the civil service. Present human resource policies are in practice plagued by political favoritism throughout the administration. A good example is the office of General Secretary of each government department: although it is supposed to be the highest civil service position in each department, in fact it is a political appointment. In this climate, foreign-educated Albanians are particularly disadvantaged because of their general lack of familiarity with non-institutional ways of career advancement.

- Reverse the long-term decline in funding for research and development. If properly utilized, state-run research institutions could provide the necessary research and technical support for the implementation of state policies. The lack of such support to date has had two negative repercussions: (1) the state has lacked the capacity to suggest infrastructure and other projects to donors. All too often, as in the post-1997 period, the funds available were not utilized because of lack of implementation capacities and no serious attempts to raise funds for specific projects were made since the technical aspects were lacking, and (2) the state has often adopted policies without the necessary field research resulting in policy failure or incapability to implement the requirements undertaken.<sup>3</sup>
- Draw up a clear strategy to deal with the informal economy. Our survey shows that while the non-profit sector does not, in general, have problems in the professional integration of the target group, the public administration as well as the private sector were less capable of doing so. Given that the primary concerns of the target group were work related—work ethic, clear and universal rules of hiring/firing and career advancement—the high degree of informality in the private sector is hindering its capacities to properly utilize the labor force available. Without a proper fiscal system and strong regulatory capacities of state institutions, the private sector job market will continue to be plagued by nepotism, informality, and high risks—precisely the factors that push away this section of the labor force.
- Work with interested partners and donors to implement a program of financial compensation similar to the SOROS “Fellowship” program in order to make employment in the public sector more financially appealing. Moreover, internship programs and similar initiatives should provide a more favorable employment climate for foreign-educated Albanians.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see the controversy surrounding Albania’s WTO membership obligations. Albania became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in September 2000. Yet, despite claims by the government that it had no particular problems in complying with the WTO schedule, it soon became clear that Albania did not have the capacities to implement the necessary reforms. As a result, Albania’s credibility as a trade partner was seriously hampered. For more details, Commission of the European Communities, *Albania Stabilisation and Association Report 2004*, Brussels, 3. Available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr\\_alb.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr_alb.htm).

## IV. Three Waves of Albanian Migration

Although often confused in common parlance, there is a conceptual difference between the terms “emigration” and “brain drain.” Emigration or “out-migration” refers to the act of moving to or settling in another country or region with the intention to reside permanently. On the other hand, “brain drain” or “human capital flight” refers to the emigration of trained and talented individuals from one jurisdiction to another due to conflict or lack of opportunity or health hazards where they are living. Conceptually, it is useful to compare it to “capital flight”—the same way capital moves towards units with the highest expected return to investment, talented individuals move towards jurisdictions with the highest expected opportunities for professional achievement. A country that is experiencing brain drain loses its investment in higher education as well as the social capital of which the individual was a part of. The term “brain drain” was first coined by the Royal Society of London to describe the outflow of scientists and technologists to the United States and Canada in the 1950s. More generally, from the 1960s onwards, brain drain has been associated with the flight of human capital from the developing to the developed world.

Traditionally, Albania has been a country that has produced out-migration of labor. With the exception of the communist period when all forms of migration were strictly prohibited, Albanians have generally traveled and settled abroad for work due to the relative scarcity of resources and opportunities within the country. However, it was in the post-1990 environment that this phenomenon took epic proportions. As a result of the precipitous decline in living standards and the deterioration of the security situation, emigration and brain drain became serious problems for Albanian society. For our purposes, it is useful to divide the massive outflow of human capital from Albania in three non-temporal waves. We will discuss the first two waves in order to set up the context within which the third wave—composed wholly of specialists and students that are the focus of this inquiry—occurred.

The first wave is made up of the two surges of mass migration in 1990-1992 and 1997-1998 that are closely associated with the two implosions of the Albanian state and the accompanying precipitous falls in living standards and the physical security of citizens. It starts with the 4000 emigrants that forced their way in Western embassies in July 1990, it continues with the massive illegal border crossings to Greece, the commandeering of shipping vessels to Italy and restarts with the massive flights of a similar nature in 1997. By August 1991, around 200,000 Albanians had left Albania. By 1997, their number had reached 450,000 people or 14% of the population.<sup>4</sup>

While personal economic interests certainly played a role, these waves of emigration were perceived mostly as a flight away from evil—that is why they were sudden, massive and with the intent of settling for good in the host countries. More importantly, these

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<sup>4</sup> Ilir Gedeshi, *Emigrimi i Elites Intelektuale nga Shqipëria gjatë Periudhës së Tranzicionit* (Tirana: Luarasi, 1999), 40.

emigrants were not motivated by their personal professional ambitions but by survival—mostly economic but often physical. While there were many individual professors and researchers that participated in the migratory patterns of this wave, their motives did not differ from the workers, youth and unemployed.

However, by its very nature, mass migration follows the political, economic and social developments of the country. With the restoration of state structures in the second half of 1997 and the gradual normalization of basic services, the *raison d'être* of the wave has been assuaged. Moreover, host countries have increasingly tightened border controls and most have signed repatriation agreements with Albania thus making illegal immigration a risky enterprise. To date, this wave has slowed down to a steady trickle—although its continued strength ought not to be underestimated given that 53 percent of young people (aged 14 to 17) would like to live in another country in the future.

The second wave is more constant in nature, although vulnerable to the ups and downs of the Albanian transition and continues to date. It is composed of people that emigrated mainly for economic reasons, many of them through regular channels. Among the migrants of this group, there are scientists, technicians and researchers. Their emigration lowered the quality of the available labor force and weakened Albania's policy formulation and implementation capacities. The difficult reforms carried out by the first democratic party administration (1992-1997) liberalized the political and economic systems and, in the process, turned highly-qualified personnel into a disadvantaged social group. As a result, many of them left the country to settle abroad. Differently than first wave members, the second wave is composed mainly of married persons who have emigrated with their families.<sup>5</sup> This demonstrates that the emigration of second wave members is usually well-planned and with the intent of permanent settlement abroad. There were four main reasons for this:

- *Budgetary cuts for research and development.* Given the catastrophic falls in the industrial and agricultural sectors and the corresponding ballooning of budget deficits,<sup>6</sup> dictated sharp cuts in government spending. One of the biggest losers in this process was the research and development sector since it was not considered a high priority sector and its benefits tend to be long term. As a result, by 1995, Albania was unable to carry out scientific studies for attracting foreign investment—a reality that impeded the disbursement of reconstruction funds in 1997/8 to the Albanian Government according to OSCE special envoy for Albania, Franz Vranitzky.<sup>7</sup>
- *Weak private sector.* In developed countries as well as many developing ones, the private sector has taken an increasingly important—and, in Western countries, primary—role in supporting R&D for its own purposes. However, in Albania, the

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<sup>5</sup> Gedeshi, 46.

<sup>6</sup> European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Transition Report Update, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Gedeshi shows that the number of scientists and researchers in state-run institutions decreased as follows: 1992-9000; 1993-5900; 1994-5000; 1995-3700. For budgetary information on the yearly decline of R&D funding, see the issues of *Shkenca dhe Zhvillimi Teknologjik*.

private sector that emerged out of the privatization of state-owned enterprises lacked the capacities to finance scientific research or even employ Foreign-educated managers. With the exception of a few firms in communications, the private sector generally lacks the economies of scale and financial wherewithal to employ technical personnel for highly specialized positions. Although the capacities of the private sector have improved significantly, a business culture that favors nepotism combined with a labor market that offers poor pickings in R&D, marketing research, public relations and business expansion strategies have impeded robust growth.

▪ *Political interference in state-run research and higher education institutions.* Widespread political interference in state-run research and higher education institutions has severely undermined the human capital available as well as the morale of members of the scientific community. During the first democratic administration, a lustration law was passed in 1993 giving directors of enterprises and institutions full power to hire and fire people without having to justify their actions and without recourse to appeal. Many administrators, university professors and researchers were dismissed in the name of de-Communization.<sup>8</sup> While it is difficult to pronounce a moral judgment on these policies—after all, some kind of lustration was desirable given the change in regime—the outcome was turmoil and low morale in the affected institutions. Although, the reform rationale was no longer present, the Socialist administration was guilty of widespread political and clan-based interference in research institutions and universities as well. For example, many sessional faculty members in the Faculty of Social Sciences were laid off and less-qualified staff was hired instead. This resulted in diminished morale among faculty and lower overall performance by the new staff. Overall, political interference remains one of the primary factors that impedes the strengthening of the Albanian public sector.

▪ *Failure of the scientific community to adapt to the new system.* In the uncertain environment of fast-paced liberalization, some scientists and researchers failed to take advantage of the limited opportunities that materialized as a result of Albania's openness to the West. Overnight, researchers that had a guaranteed workplace and prestige, found themselves in a high-risk uncertain environment. They had neither the experience nor the training to search for funds or retraining from international research institutions. Moreover, when they tried, they quickly found out that the outdated laboratories and communication technologies available in Albania in the 1980s put them at a severe disadvantage with their peers abroad. Finally, in an environment of rapidly shifting value systems, the social prestige accorded to this group in the previous system quickly dried up. Instead, in popular parlance they were often viewed as anachronistic bookish people at a time when money was to be made elsewhere—primarily through emigration. Consequently, many members of the scientific community chose emigration over unemployment, social derision, and future uncertainty.

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<sup>8</sup> Fatmir Mema, "Albania: Vortices of Imbalance," *Higher Education in Europe*, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, (October 2004), 313.

Only the presence of international institutions such as TEMPUS, PHARE, ACE, PECO, and COPERNICUS has contributed to the retaining of a fraction of Albania's R&D capacities. Thus, only during the 1992-1995 period, 1,335 Albanians were able to win short and medium-term specialization scholarships mainly in West European countries.<sup>9</sup> If it was not for the constant injection of funds and material aid from these programs, Albania would have had hardly any capacities from which an eventual regeneration of R&D could occur.

The second wave has had an enormous impact on the Albanian capacities to retain qualified personnel. Up to 1998, 35.8 percent of graduate degree professors had emigrated. The University of Tirana alone has lost some 40 percent of its academic staff of which 90 percent are under 40 years old.<sup>10</sup> This figure stands well-beyond the 2-4 percent loss of scientific-research personnel that most East European countries have lost to the West in the same period.<sup>11</sup> A survey by the Center for Economic and Social Studies in March-June 1998 showed that the potential brain drain would be twice the rate of real brain drain given that 63 percent of researchers desire to settle abroad for the long-term or forever.<sup>12</sup> Considering the multiple migratory venues open to members of the second wave—direct migration, failure to return after a period of specialization abroad, failure to return upon graduation abroad, employment in international organizations—as well as the high desire to emigrate and the increasing sophistication and technical capacities of individual members for interaction with Western agencies, it will become increasingly more difficult for Albania to retain the existing pool of technical and scientific personnel.

However, due to the demographic and educational make up of the second wave—Albanian-educated persons that emigrate with their families with the intent of long-term settlement in the host countries—members of this wave are not part of our focus group although individual members may join and participate actively in the programme. Since the programme aims to facilitate the return and professional integration of Foreign-educated Albanians, our aims contradict those of second wave members and diminish the overall efficiency of the programme.

The third and final wave constitutes the object of our research. Its defining characteristics differ from the other two waves since the main purpose for leaving Albania is solely educational and not migratory. Members of this group take advantage of the possibilities offered by life in a free and open country to further their comparative advantage in the job market by completing their higher education abroad. While their individual preferences differ widely, most members of this group are open to the possibility of return as long as their country of origin creates the professional and, in some cases,

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<sup>9</sup> Gedeshi, 37.

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO News Release, "UNESCO and HP Joint Project Contributes to Reverse Brain Drain in Albania," 12 April 2005.

<sup>11</sup> *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 51, No. 37 (May 20 2005) p. A34-5.

<sup>12</sup> Gedeshi, 6-7.



economic and political environment necessary for these individuals to lead fulfilling lives. Moreover, third wave brain drain is more inelastic—that is to say that it is less vulnerable to fluctuations to economic or security considerations. Members of this wave are neither fleeing away from evil nor are they under intense financial pressure. Indeed, there may be a positive correlation between the improvement of macroeconomic indicators in Albania and the size of the third wave although no firm empirical proof of this exists as yet. It is reasonable to suggest that over time, as Albanian families improve their financial situation, the propensity to educate their children abroad increases.

The improved financial capabilities of Albanian families as well as the desire of students to complete their education abroad has created an ever-widening pool of eager youngsters looking for educational opportunities out of the country. The robust “demand-side” of the brain drain equation is becoming increasingly well-matched by more effective programs by developed countries to retain new graduates. Canada’s and Australia’s “point schemes” have given rise to what Albanians call the “Canada phenomenon” that affects the second and third waves.<sup>13</sup> Even governments that once strove to keep people out are encouraging skilled students to stay. Sweden, Germany, the United States and other OECD members are all pioneering programs to attract and retain foreigners. In this environment of intense competition for highly-skilled, technical sectors of the labor market, Albania is losing not only because it has comparatively little to offer, but primarily because it lacks a comprehensive strategy for turning brain drain into brain circulation.

It is estimated that every year 3000 Albanians enroll in Western higher education institutions—mainly in Italy, France, Germany, and the United States.<sup>14</sup> This means that 30% of Albanians enrolling in colleges and universities do so in the West. At present, about 12,000 Albanian students are enrolled in Italian universities alone.<sup>15</sup> The third wave is made up of two categories of people:

- *Albanian-educated professors and technicians.* Members of this category would normally be classified as second waivers except that, once abroad, they enrolled in institutions of higher learning in order to adapt or upgrade their skills. They may have had the same motivation as other emigrants for leaving the country but, relatively young and usually single, they now belong to the third wave profile: Foreign-educated Albanians that are still looking for an environment conducive to their career goals.
- *Foreign-educated students of the post-1990 generation.* These persons have left Albania for education abroad and, generally, are not biased against a possible return. However, they tend to settle wherever opportunities are highest. Moreover, since many of them leave Albania on international student visas, they have no choice but to return once these visas expire. These two factors create a window of

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<sup>13</sup> The Economist, “Outward Bound,” September 26, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Prof. Dr. Myqerem Tafaj, “Considerations about Massive Brain Drain from Albania and Strategies for Attracting High-Qualified Scientists.”

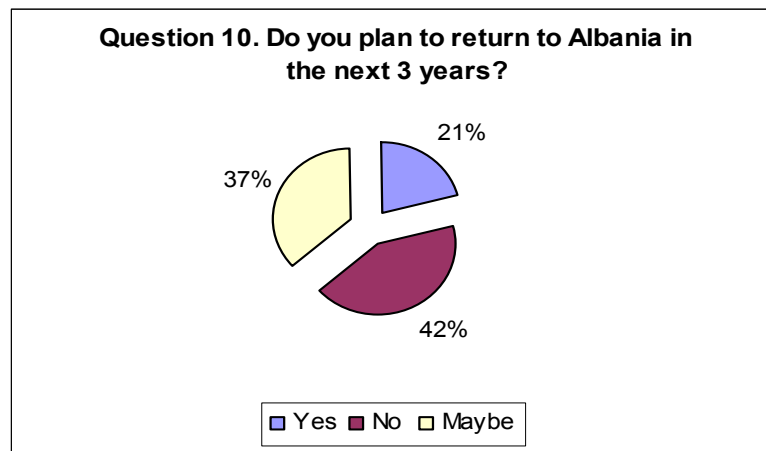
<sup>15</sup> Unofficial estimate released by personnel of Albanian Embassy in Rome, 2004.

opportunity for attracting foreign-educated students back to Albania and integrating them in the public administration and private business sector.

## V. Survey Findings

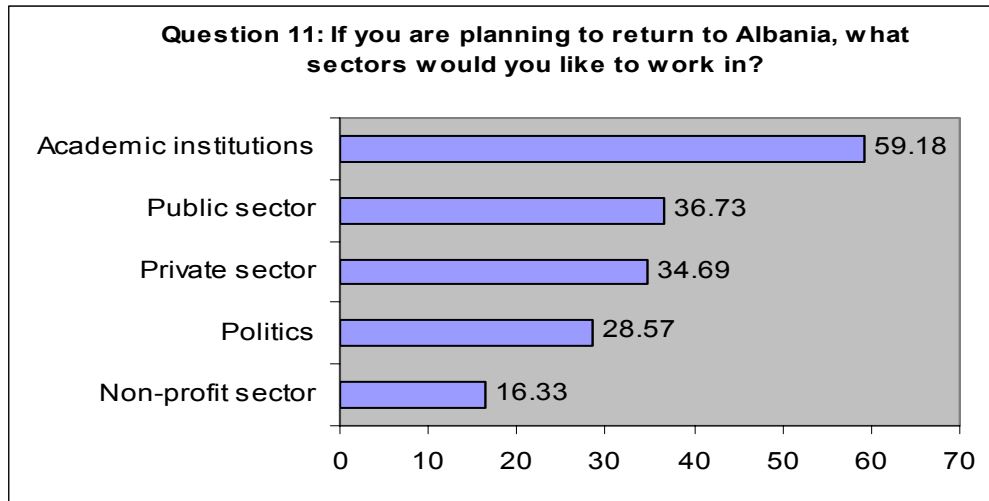
AIIS surveyed two different samples of this target group: (a) Albanians currently studying abroad; and (b) Albanians that have completed their studies abroad and have returned to Albania (SEE APPENDIX I). It is interesting to note that 21.4 percent of students abroad were certain that they will return to Albania within the next three years while 36.9 percent thought it possible. That is to say that the constituency for a brain drain strategy exists—what remains to be formulated are the efficiencies of potential policies designed to increase the rate of return.

Figure 1: Percentage of students that plan to return to Albania in the next 3 years



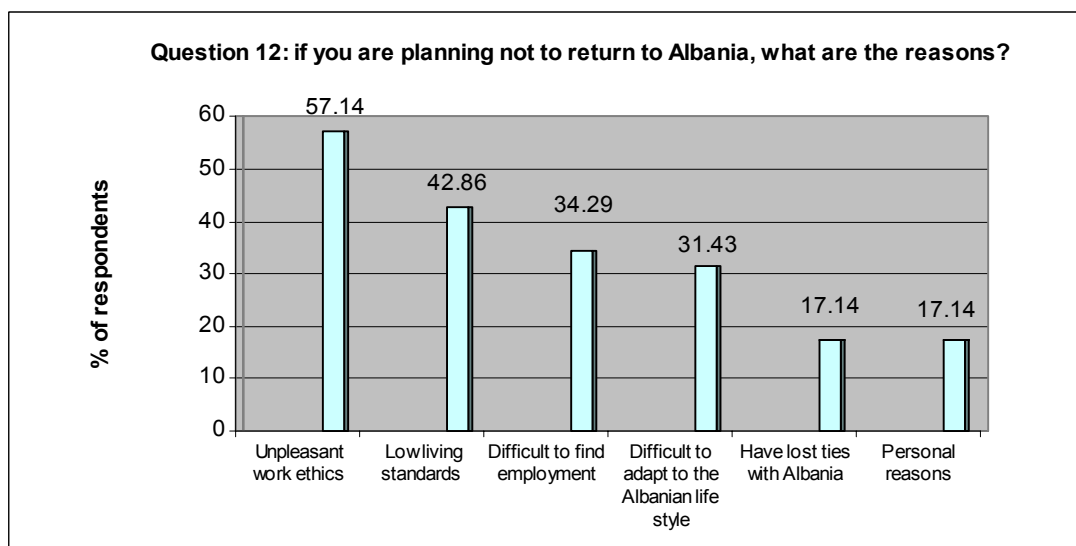
Of those that want to return, an overwhelming 59.2 percent prefer to work in the academia (more than one answer was allowed). The civil service came second with 36.7 percent while only 16.3 percent expressed a desire to work in the non profit sector. Interestingly, a remarkable 28.6 percent want to get into politics. These results suggest that the strategy for enhancing the attractiveness of the “Albania option” for this target group ought to focus primarily on the institutions of higher education and the public administration. The policies of employment and career advancement in these institutions will be a determining factor in mitigating the negative effects of the brain drain and strengthening local technical and administrative capacities.

Figure 2: Preferred Employment Sectors by Students that Plan to Return



On the other hand, the students that do not plan to return confirmed the hypothesis that the work ethic is the primary factor that has influenced their decision not to return—57.1 percent rated this as a factor. Considering the importance of work ethic, difficulty to find employment and low living standards for the decision not to return, it is possible to deduce that a specific strategy combined with a long-term increase in living standards will eventually mitigate the reasons for pursuing a career abroad. The three answers that suggest that a return is simply not possible are classified as the three least important answers for this group.

Figure 3: Reasons for Not Returning to Albania

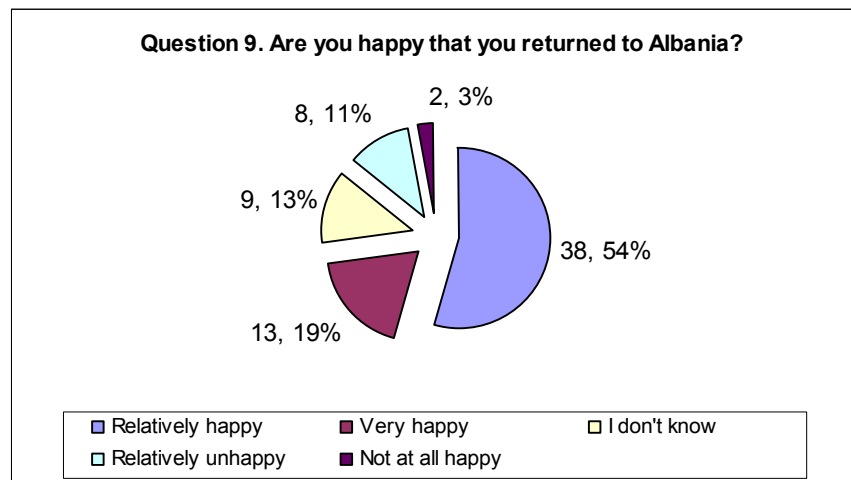


The Albanians that have completed their studies abroad and have returned to Albania have found employment mostly in the private and public sector—39 and 37 percent

respectively—while a remarkably high number of them, 24 percent, have found employment in the non-profit sector. The notable capacities of the non-profit sector to attract highly skilled and relatively expensive labor may be explained by the fact that Albanian “civil society” remains largely donor driven and, hence, the requirements on its deliverables are determined by “Western” standards. Members of this group found employment relatively quickly—only 6 percent did not find a job 6 months after their return.

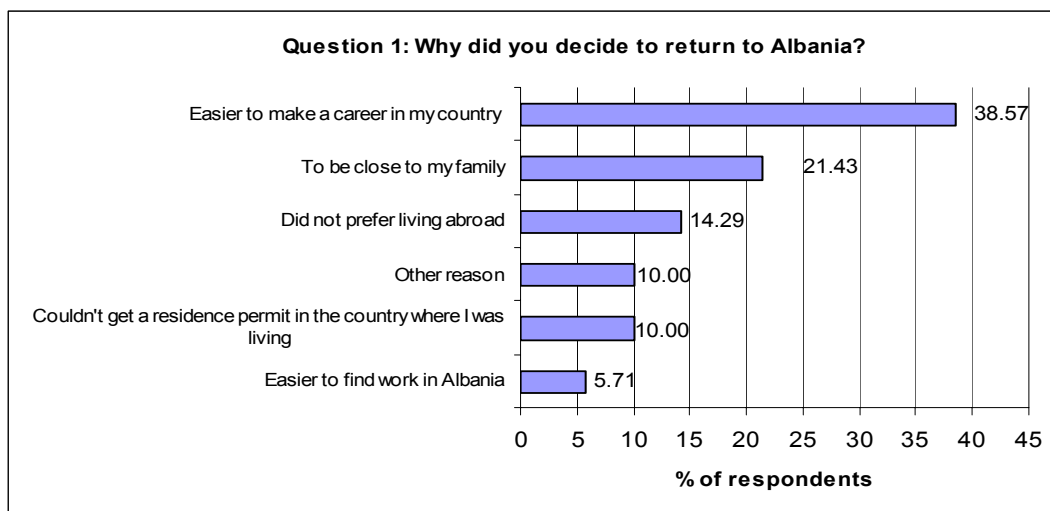
Of the returnees, 73 percent were very happy or somewhat happy with their decision, while only 14 percent stated that they were relatively unhappy or not at all unhappy. Once professionally integrated, Albanians educated abroad seem to have no problems adjusting to the professional and social demands of Albanian life.

Figure 4: Are you happy that you returned to Albania?



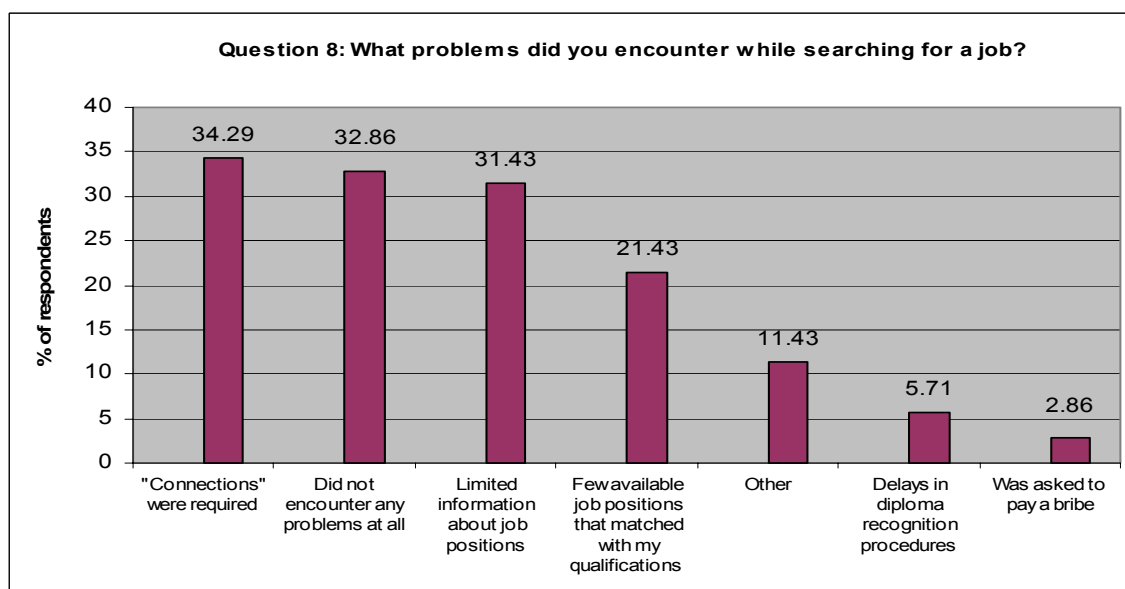
When asked to specify the reason for their return, 38.6 percent of returnees perceived it to be easier to make a career in Albania and 5.7 percent thought that it was easier to find work in their own country. The rest decided to return for personal reasons while 10 percent refused to specify. These results confirm that the career motivation is not only primary for those that have decided not to return but also for those students that have already returned to Albania.

Figure 5: Why Did You Decide to Return to Albania?



Although returnees found work relatively quickly, they did encounter problems while job searching. Thus, 34 percent of respondents found that relationships were a requirement for finding a job, 31 percent answered that more information ought to be made public, while 3 percent answered that a bribe was necessary for finding a place, surprisingly in the private sector (more than one answer was allowed). On the other hand, 33 percent had no problem finding work. The main problem—nepotism—demonstrates that the negative perceptions of those Albanians that do not plan to return are partly founded on a reality of informal hiring/firing practices. A cross tabulation of these answers with the sector of employment indicates broadly that the non-profit sector is the least problematic while the public and private sector are equally problematic.

Figure 6: What Problems did You Encounter on Your Job Search?

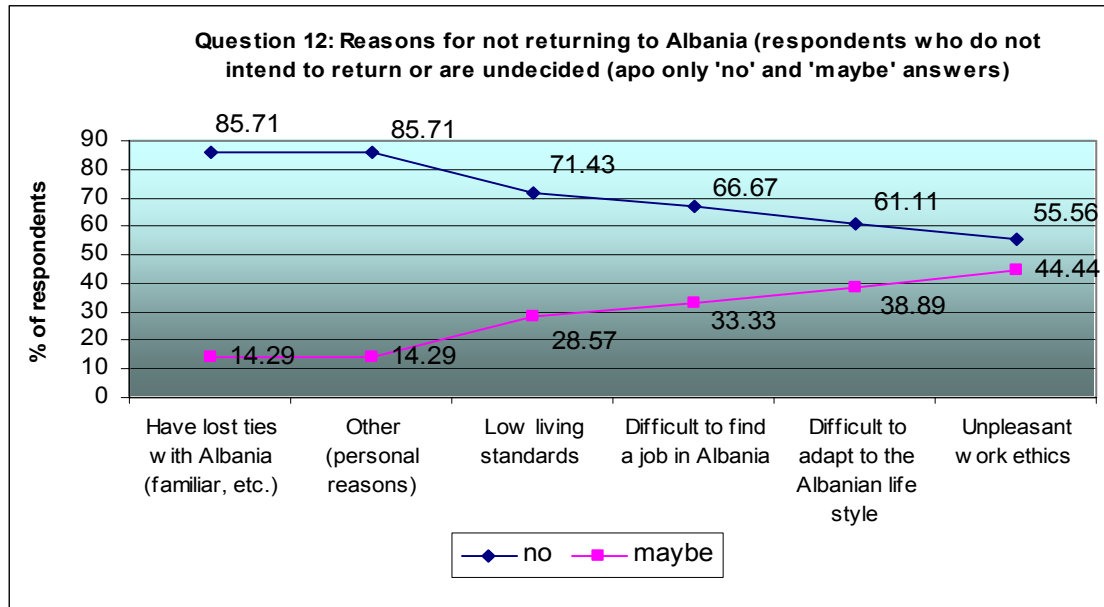


## VI. Analysis

The survey included two groups—Albanians that are currently studying abroad and Albanians that have returned after completing their studies abroad—in order to ascertain the perceptions of the former group on the advantages and disadvantages of a possible return as well as the problems encountered by the latter group in the process of professional integration in Albanian institutions. In this section, we will look at the perceptions of these groups for the public, private and non-profit employment sector in order to find out the specific problems—real or perceived—when evaluating the potential of each sector to attract foreign-educated labor force.

The respondents who had decided not to return or were not sure if they would return to Albania in the next three years specified different answers for Albania's unattractiveness as a place of residence and work. The respondents that have decided not to return had mostly personal reasons for doing so—they either had no ties to Albania or had other personal reasons—while some of them simply perceived Albanian living standards as too low. Because of the personal nature of the reasons, it would be very difficult to persuade members of this group to return—they have already made up their minds. On the other hand, those respondents that were not sure if they would return specified an unsatisfactory work ethic, difficulty in adaptation to Albanian life and scarce employment opportunities as their primary concern. Thus, for most of them, career-related issues were primary factors for their hesitation. Given that this group is open to persuasion since they have relatively few personal reasons for not returning, the brain circulation strategy ought to focus in institution-building measures as well as a public relations campaign designed to convince Albanian students abroad that institutional reform is professionalizing and enhancing the insulation of the civil service from the socio-political environment. If these students are convinced that the future of Albanian state institutions is better than present realities, some of them may return even at the expense of their financial situation.

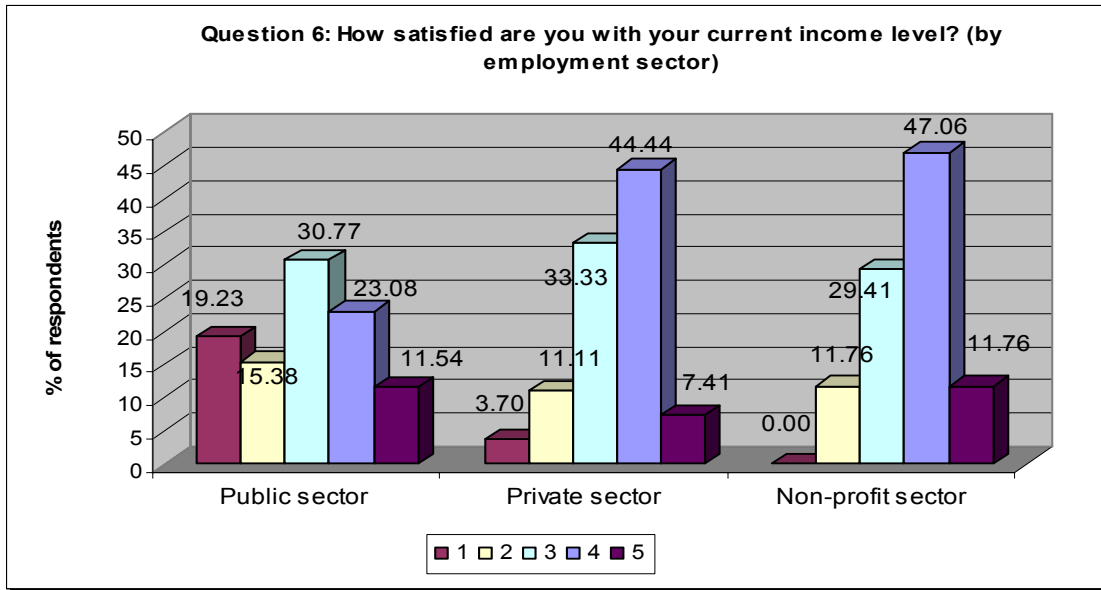
Figure 7: Respondents that Will not or may not Return classified by Reasons for not Returning



The second group of respondents—those that have returned to Albania and are already employed—were asked to rate their satisfaction with their current income from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). While employees in the non-profit and private sector were relatively satisfied with their incomes, the situation in the public sector was more problematic—34.6 percent were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied with their income. However, given the overwhelming concern with work as opposed to income related issues, it remains uncertain whether an improvement of current income levels would have a positive impact on the inclusion of the target group in the public sector. Overall, it seems that the primary concern of Albanians currently studying abroad is not income but non-institutional means of hiring/firing, career advancement and work ethic.

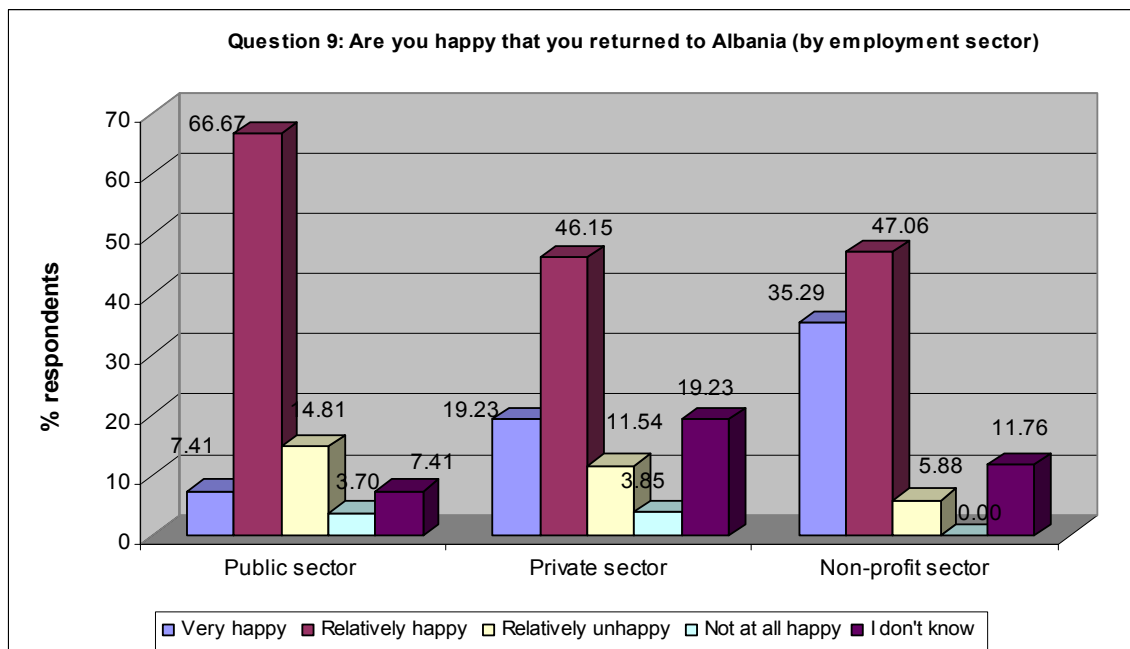
Figure 8: How Happy Are You With Your Current Level of Income?





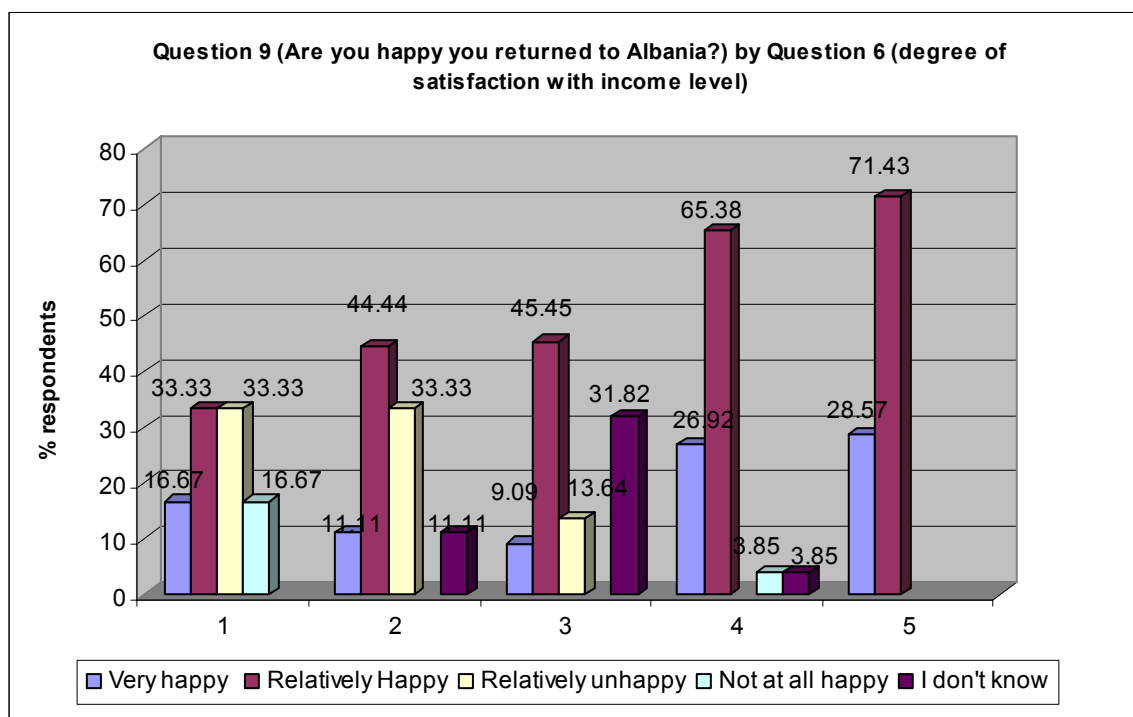
Given that work is the primary factor in determining whether to return, it may come as no surprise that respondents who are employed are happy with the decision to return. Thus, 74 percent, 65 percent, and 82 percent of respondents employed in the public, private and non-profit sectors respectively are either “very happy” or “relatively happy” with this decision. Most of the others answered that they did not know if their decision had turned out to be a good one. This confirms that questions of employment rather than income are key to making Albania an attractive option for students currently studying abroad.

Figure 9: Are You Happy that You Returned to Albania?



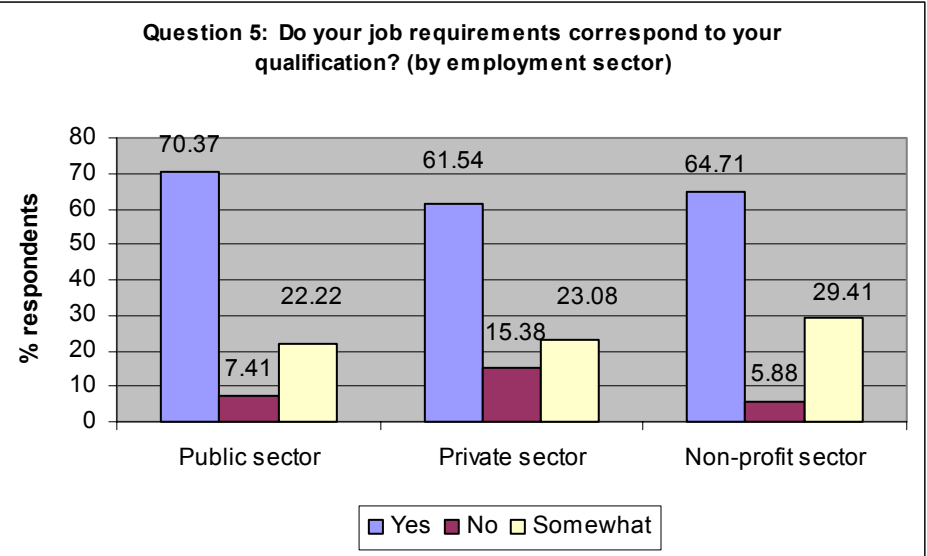
Respondents were asked to rate their degree of satisfaction with their current income levels on a scale of 1 (minimal) to 5 (maximal degree of satisfaction). It is perhaps not surprising that the degree of satisfaction with the respondent's income level is positively related to the degree of satisfaction with the decision to return to Albania. While this relationship is not clear-cut for low degrees of satisfaction with income levels—the corresponding percentage of respondents happy to have returned is in the low fifties even though they are highly dissatisfied with their incomes—it becomes clear when considering the respondents that are relatively satisfied with their income levels (3, 4, 5).

Figure 10: Percentage of respondents happy with the decision to return related to the respondents' degree of satisfaction with their current income levels



Overall, respondents are satisfied that their positions correspond to their qualifications. Thus, if Albania manages to attract foreign-educated students, it does have the mechanisms in place to utilize their skills and experience in the workplace. There is no need for recommending modifications in the legal framework that arranges job placement in the civil service.

Figure 11: Do Your Job Requirements Correspond to Your Qualifications?



## VII. Potential Benefits of Turning “Brain Drain” in “Brain Circulation”

The negative impact of this brain drain is well-accounted for in the literature. Suffice to add that, drawing from the experience of other developing countries, a cheap labor force alone has never sufficed to develop national economies. Instead, the key competitive factor for poorer countries is low wages combined with skilled, disciplined and capable labor. Low wage and low skill countries are relegated to the bottom of the world economic ladder. More specifically, there is a direct relationship between countries with low investment in education, brain drain, and low esteem for vocational training on one hand, and poverty and low rates of economic growth on the other.<sup>16</sup> Given the competition for the limited pool of foreign investment in Southeastern Europe, a national strategy for combating brain drain ought to be a key part of the larger development strategies of the Albanian government.

Despite its negative impact, Albania’s brain drain is also an opportunity that may bring considerable benefits to the country. Albania has passed the emergency stage in its economic development—a simple liberalization of the market no longer suffices for maintaining high growth rates. The increased complexity of economic relationships and the obligations of state institutions in formulating and maintaining specific legal frameworks for economic growth demands a more sophisticated public debate on the specific strategies to be followed, a highly-specialized work force to make the necessary changes possible, and a higher capacity to internalize best experiences abroad. Establishing dynamic links with Albanian students abroad and rehabilitating the country’s image as a viable choice for professional development will:

- *Create a more dynamic labor market.* At present, competition in the technical and scientific segments of the labor market is relatively weak. Except for a few sectors of the economy such as construction (architects, construction engineers), labor market offers do not satisfy demand. Although empirical studies are lacking, anecdotal evidence on the deterring effect this has had on investment abounds. Increasing the inflow of our target group would inject fresh energy, ideas and enhance competition in the labor market. Employers would have more choice and the quality of labor offers would be increased—thus stimulating growth beyond the construction and food service industries which are becoming the “traditional” growth sectors of the Albanian economy. The creation of a “brain market” would benefit present employers as well as stimulate the creation of new growth industries.
- *Invigorate public debate on political, economic and social issues.* In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill argues that establishing a free market of ideas is one of the requirements necessary for getting to the truth. While the philosophical aspects of the statement do not concern us directly, foreign-educated Albanians would be an

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<sup>16</sup> Larry Elliot, “Stop the Brain Drain,” *The Guardian Weekly*, December 17-23 2004.

excellent source of new ideas in Albania's public debates. Currently, space in the Albanian public debate is "monopolized" by relatively few sources: politicians, independent analysts, and the international community in cooperation with the local ersatz civil society. The injection of fresh sources that have the potential to affirm themselves in what is often described as a "closed circle" would increase the availability of alternatives that are missing at present.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, AIIS interviews and other research data shows that many post-graduate students are working on Albanian-related topics. The publication of this baggage of studies on economics, politics, history and other fields may contribute to an informed debate on contemporary problems facing Albania. A stronger "market of ideas" will help not only the presentation of alternative solutions to Albania's problems but also will enrich the Albanian worldview making it more flexible and more capable of understanding the fast-paced changes of the environment around it.

- *Inject new methodologies in the workplace.* This occurs in two ways: first, returnees bring the technical knowledge and experience they have gained abroad in workplaces that may otherwise lack it thus bringing about a unique synergy of local and international practices. Second, while more controversial from a sociological perspective, it may very well be that returnees bring about new organizational practices that increase efficiency and the quality of deliverables. While this is difficult to prove, it is no mere chance that many of the better-paying employers of young people in Albania—international organizations and NGOs—generally prefer Western-trained to locally-trained workers. In the eyes of employers at least, these youngsters do not bring in only new knowledge but, more importantly, a different ethic of work and organization.
- *Establish cooperation with foreign universities and research institutions.* Returnees may help the creation of networks, joint projects, and the institutional exchange of knowledge and experience between Albanian and Western institutions. The experience of the last fifteen years has shown that such practices have been the main factor of sustenance and growth for most Albanian research institutions.
- *Support the country's European perspective.* A successful strategy on brain drain requires some degree of competition between Albania and Western countries for a specific labor force. In this context, Albania's success fundamentally depends on "selling" the idea of positive change towards Euro-Atlantic integration to members of this labor force. Thus, a successful strategy on brain drain ought to be part of the larger strategy on integration. Increasing the rate of return and professional integration of the target group would, in its turn, aid the integration process itself because of the skills and ideas which these students would bring with them while the very process of accommodating them would mean a more

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<sup>17</sup> One example is the affirmation lately of the "liberal group." Mostly composed of Foreign-educated returnees, they have managed to have a strong impact on public debate, become a source of consultation for policy-makers and, most importantly, enrich the Albanian worldview with the neo-liberal alternative.

professional civil service with transparent and universal human resource management practices—in itself a requirement of the country’s European future.

## VIII. Integrating Foreign-educated Albanians in the Public Administration

AIIS judges that the integration of foreign-educated Albanians in the private sector is best left to market forces. As Albania becomes a more attractive place to work and the labor force becomes better skilled and more diverse, it will be in the interest of medium and big businesses to formulate specific policies targeting this resource pool.<sup>18</sup> Market forces will be a much better regulator of these policies than could be hoped for by public institutions.

On the other hand, the formulation and implementation of specific policies for attracting Foreign-educated Albanians in the public administration and state-run higher education and research institutions has become imperative. The supply side and the demand side exist: only the implementation of a comprehensive strategy is lacking from maximizing utility. From the supply-side, our survey indicates that Foreign-educated Albanians are returning and, moreover, there is reason to believe that the rate of return would increase considerably if they perceive that they will find sufficient professional space. Many Albanians want to return after completing their studies even at the expense of financial compensation. On the other hand, from the demand-side, Albanian state institutions are in urgent need of strengthening their technical and administrative capacities—the country's EU integration process requires it.<sup>19</sup> A more efficient utilization of the human resources pool available would help a great deal in this regard.

There are a number of civil society initiatives dealing with the return of Albanian students educated abroad: MJAFT!, Albstudent, As@n, New Albanian Generation, as well as a number of other groups organized around the locality or higher education institution of its members. Not only do students want to return, but they are taking action in this regard. Given also the recent Strategy of the Albanian government to enhance the employment opportunities of the target group, the time is right for a common institutional

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<sup>18</sup> There are signs that this has already started. For example, Raiffeisen Bank recently concluded an internship with 40 students, some of them currently studying abroad. The Albanian Chamber of Commerce has also initiated projects targeting students for training

<sup>19</sup> A state's civil service is divided in two: technical and administrative personnel. The administrative personnel are "part of the extractive forces of the modern state." They are directly responsible for managing the day-to-day administrative affairs of the state as well as collecting taxes and providing direct services to the population. On the other hand, technical personnel are responsible for consolidating state power through the development of the economy in order to increase the resource base as well as the development of strong armed forces that can deal effectively with internal non-state power centers as well as external threats. Financial officers, military engineers, economists and the like sponsor research and development, tend to the needs of local businesses and formulate policies conducive to economic growth. See, Wolfram Fischer and Peter Lundgreen, "The Recruitment and Training of Administrative and Technical Personnel," in Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 456-561. Given the weak administrative and technical capacities of Albania and their inability to deal efficiently with the demands of European integration, a better utilization of human resources has become imperative. The latest EU report points out that it is precisely in the state's capacities to implement the legal frameworks of the *acquis communautaire* that the process of EU integration has hit a snag. See, Commission of the European Communities, *Albania Stabilisation and Association Report 2004*, Brussels, 3. Available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr\\_alb.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr_alb.htm).

effort to achieve efficient outcomes. However, our survey indicates that with the exception of the “Fellowship” program of the SOROS Foundation that is relatively well known, other programs remain relatively unknown by students abroad. Most students think that these initiatives are “somewhat” or “a little” effective. But, since these initiatives are relatively new, there is no reason to dismiss them *en masse*. On the contrary, institutionalizing some type of cooperation mechanism between these civil society groups, the government and the private sector may facilitate the project of integrating foreign-educated Albanians in Albanian institutions and businesses.

In order to make the Albanian public administration an attractive professional destination for a well-educated labor force, it is useful to think of the cost-benefit analysis that regulates the decision-making of the potential returnee. The factors that will impact the decision-making are: pay/benefits, job security, and the prospect of a career in the service. On the positive side, a complete legal framework that determines the status of the civil servant and protects the service from undue interference<sup>20</sup> and an employer that assures prompt payment of health and social benefits give the civil service a competitive advantage over the private sector.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, as the final EU report on Albania notes, corruption, political interference, high turn-over, and insufficient implementation of the public administration-related legal framework, continue to hamper the consolidation of a professional civil service.<sup>22</sup> Organizational theory has established that the career motivation is the primary motivator in turning the cost-benefit analysis of the potential employee to the benefit of the organization—a claim that is substantiated by our survey.<sup>23</sup> Employees must believe that there is room for career-making within state institutions. Clear guidelines for career-advancement must be universally and impartially imposed on state bureaucrats. Where uniform procedures in hiring/firing and promotion are substituted with patronage appointments, the creation of a bureaucratic esprit de corps is undermined, the pool of available appointees is limited, the efficiency of the state machine is undermined and, the cost benefit analysis of the bureaucrat undermines the implementation of internal behavioral requirements.

According to a score of reports from international organizations, dealing with the havoc wreaked within the ranks of the civil service by political interference, high turn-over, and large discretionary powers of top civil servants in setting internal requirements is probably the primary challenge facing Albania today.<sup>24</sup> The incentive to return to Albania

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<sup>20</sup> Commission of the European Communities, *Albania Stabilisation and Association Report 2004*, Brussels, 3. Available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr\\_alb.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr_alb.htm).

<sup>21</sup> Many, if not most, private sector employers do not pay health/security benefits for their employees while the state does. AIIS Interview with Nora Zela, Department of Public Administration, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> For example, within 18 months in 2002-2003, the customs agency had six general directors which severely hampered its extractive capacities. *Albania: Stabilisation and Association Report 2004*.

<sup>23</sup> Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying how States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 85.

<sup>24</sup> For a non-exhaustive list, see The World Bank, *Albania: Empirical Results*, <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/capacitybuild/d-surveys.html>; Kaufmann, A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi, *Governance Matters III: Governance Indicators for 1996-2002*, The World Bank, April 5, 2004; Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index*, London, 7 October 2003, 5 in <http://www.transparency.org>; Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2004: Albania*, <http://www.freedomhouse.org>; Commission of the European Communities, *Albania Stabilisation and*



and seek employment in the public administration for Foreign-educated students is very low—only 18 percent of survey respondents currently studying abroad have decided to return. Without noticeable improvements in governance indicators and especially in internal organizational rules that establish clear, transparent, and universal rules of behavior, the capacity of state institutions to attract well-educated employees will remain low.

Nevertheless, the Department of Public Administration has formulated a coherent strategy for facilitating the incorporation of Albanians educated abroad in the civil service. Noting that the work experience requirements of Law 8549 on “The Status of the Civil Servant” considerably limited the number of applicants from this target group, the Office of the Prime Minister released Order 37 on January 28, 2004 “On Encouraging the Employment of Foreign-Educated Persons.”<sup>25</sup> AIIS lobbying also played a role in this positive change. The Strategy disposes of the work experience requirement for most “specialist” positions for Albanians educated abroad. In January 2005, the Government approved the following criteria of equivalence for the target group:

- 1 year of work experience is equal to a specialization of up to 1 year;
- 2 years of work experience are equal to a Master’s of Arts degree;
- 4 years of work experience are equal to a PhD.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the Strategy includes also the creation of a database of students currently studying abroad, a better coordination of work between Albanian embassies and the Department of Public Administration, public information campaigns, and working with potential donors for increasing the incomes of this target group in a manner similar to the Soros “Fellowship” program. However, the relative early life of the Strategy, the parliamentary elections of July 03, 2005 that left the country without an effective government for a period of two months as well as the dearth of evaluation matrices make it relatively difficult to predict the results of the Strategy and the degree to which it will be implemented. According to government sources, the number of foreign-educated Albanians employed in the civil service up to January 2005 was 159.<sup>27</sup>

However, AIIS interviews with civil servants and university professors indicate that little has changed. For as long as the Albanian civil service is plagued by political appointments, the task of enhancing the professional integration of Foreign-educated Albanians in the civil service depends on changing the organizational culture of the civil

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*Association Report 2004, Brussels, 3. Available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr\\_alb.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr_alb.htm).*

<sup>25</sup> Government of the Republic of Albania, “2004 “On Encouraging the Employment of Foreign-Educated Persons,” January 28, 2004, full text <http://www.pad.gov.al>.

<sup>26</sup> AIIS Interview with Nora Zela, Department of Public Administration, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Government of the Republic of Albania, “2004 “On Encouraging the Employment of Foreign-Educated Persons,” January 28, 2004, full text <http://www.pad.gov.al> and B. Prifti, “Strategy of Employment for Foreign Educated Persons,” *Shekulli*, January 08, 2005.

service—a difficult mission given the fact that the science of organization is not practiced in Albania.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Debbie Schachter, “The Importance of Understanding Organizational Culture,” *Information Outlook*, 9.6, 18-19.

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## **ANNEX I: Survey with foreign-educated Albanians**

Although several studies on the potential consequences of the intellectual migration have been conducted so far, many of them provide little empirical evidence. The survey undertaken by AIIS aimed at analyzing the features of the brain drain phenomenon as well as its potential effects on the country's development. Therefore, the population we targeted were young Albanian students abroad or others that returned to Albania after having completed their degrees. We decided to include only individuals of age groups falling within the interval 18-40 years old as in general those above the age of 40 tend to be less likely to change residence.

One questionnaire was designed for these two different groups of people. Regarding the group of Albanians currently studying abroad, the survey aimed to assess their likelihood of return and the reasons on which they based their decision regarding potential return. Our assumption was that if the students are determined to either stay abroad or return, then there is little room for policies designed to convince them to come back. On the other hand, if there is a large percentage of students that are not sure if to return, then we ranked the reasons in favor and against a possible return in order to formulate the corresponding recommendations. On the other hand, regarding the group of Albanians that have returned, the survey aimed to assess the reasons for their return, the job market perspectives that they found in Albania and the degree of satisfaction with their professional as well as social integration.

### **Methodology**

In a preliminary stage of the survey we built an extensive database of foreign-educated Albanians (students or graduates with at least one tertiary education diploma obtained in a foreign country) which served as the basis for designing our survey sample. The database contains names, other basic personal information (fields of study/work and degrees attained or in the process of completing as well as their current localities) and contact addresses of the targeted individuals. It is divided into two groups: those residing abroad and those residing in the country. All respondents were contacted via e-mail as there was no available information on their current location and other contact information.

As the questionnaire was self administered rather than face to face interviews, we designed a questionnaire that was as short and simple as possible. For practical purposes the questionnaire consists of mostly close-ended questions. In order to avoid biases we tried to phrase clear and unambiguous questions and options as explicit and all-inclusive as possible (see Annex II: QUESTIONNAIRE).

### **Limitations of the survey**

In order to have a sample that is as representative as possible, we built a framework of the target population, for which we drew on all available data: provided either institutionally or thanks to personal acquaintances. The problem with designing such sample in our case was lack of an exhaustive list including basic demographic data: name, location, addresses, age, gender, civil status, etc that would constitute our sample frame.

A few institutions which have recently undertaken projects involving foreign-educated Albanians possessed relatively sizeable databases (The Council of Ministers' Public Administration Department, SOROS Foundation, Mjaft! organization) that we made use of to build our database. The problem with these lists was they were not evenly structured and, at places, lacked the necessary demographic information for drawing a statistically adequate sample. In the end thanks to these lists as well as AIIS-generated contacts, we came up with a database of approximately 3000 contacts, dispersed around a range of locations, including Albania. Thus, we have preferred to use the term *surveyed population* instead of sample.

As information about the location of our targeted respondents was incomplete, the only way to conduct the survey was by launching the questionnaire via e-mail to all available contacts hoping to achieve a reasonable response rate. The survey went on for 3 months (May – August 2005). The questionnaire was self-administered which reduced interviewer's bias significantly. On the other hand, differently than face-to-face interviews, surveying people over the internet often fails to provide for an adequate response rate. Hence at the end of the survey we came up with a fairly small response rate—only one in 19 contacted persons did answer—and 154 respondents.

Given these methodological limitations, the results of our survey should be interpreted with caution. They provide us with trends and tendencies rather than statistically-reliable percentages. This is because the lack of fully-reliable demographic data on this population as well as the other logistical constraints did not allow us to design a representative sample. However, as our set of 154 respondents revealed a heterogeneous distribution and their responses and attitudes did fulfill most of our hypotheses, with some degree of confidence we can use these figures to speak about tendencies and characteristics of the foreign-educated community. Moreover, given the geographical distribution of this population as indicated by a recent OECD report<sup>29</sup> and the distribution of our surveyed population, then our surveyed population is representative.

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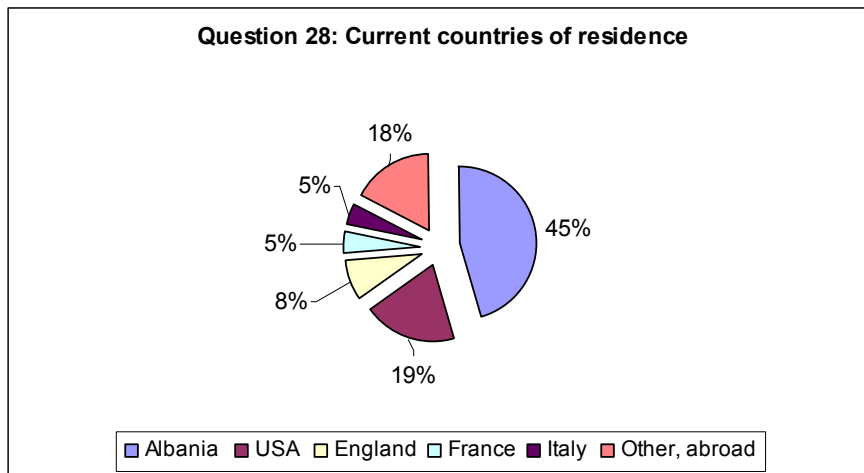
<sup>29</sup> OECD, Number of Foreign Students in Tertiary Education by Country of Origin and Country of Destination (2001), Table C3.5, <http://www.oecd.org>

## Sample Description

Two groups of people participated in our survey: Albanians that are currently studying abroad and Albanians that have returned after completing their studies abroad. However, it is important to remember that due to logistical and methodological limitation, the figures below cannot be used to make any inferences other than a description of the respondents' distribution. If accurate and complete demographic data on this population become available, then we can measure how representative our sample is.

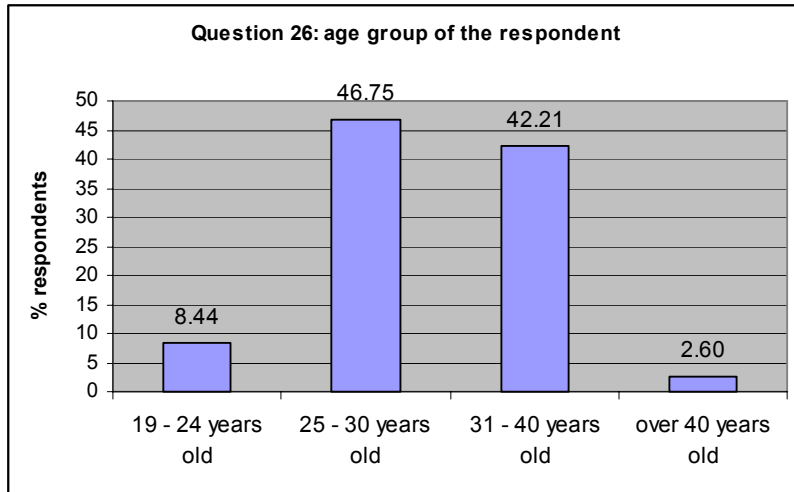
The surveyed population is spread over a wide range of locations; an overwhelming majority (45%) residing in Albania and the rest mostly in the USA (19%) and other, mainly European countries (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Respondents



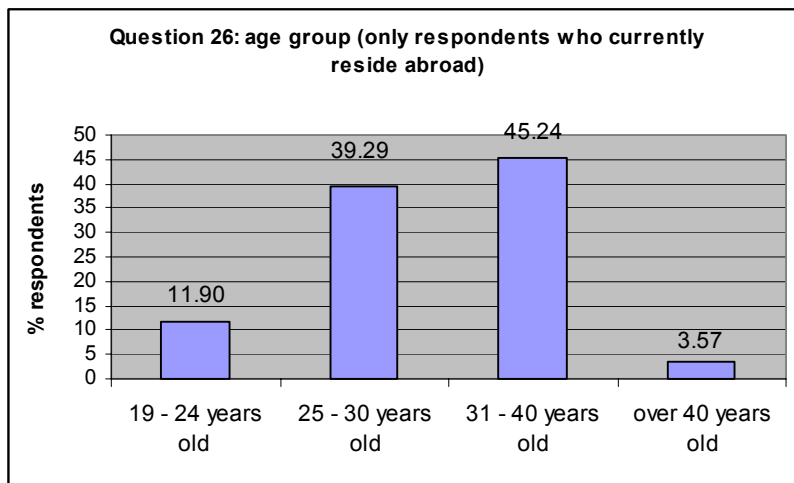
Most of the respondents belong to age – groups 25-30 yrs and 31-40 yrs old (46.75% and 42.21% respectively) and a very small portion is aged between 19-24 yrs olds.

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents



Among respondents who are currently residing abroad, most belong to the age group 31-40 years old (45.24%), a 39.29% are aged 25-30 years old and a smaller proportion (11.90%) belong to the 19-24 age group.

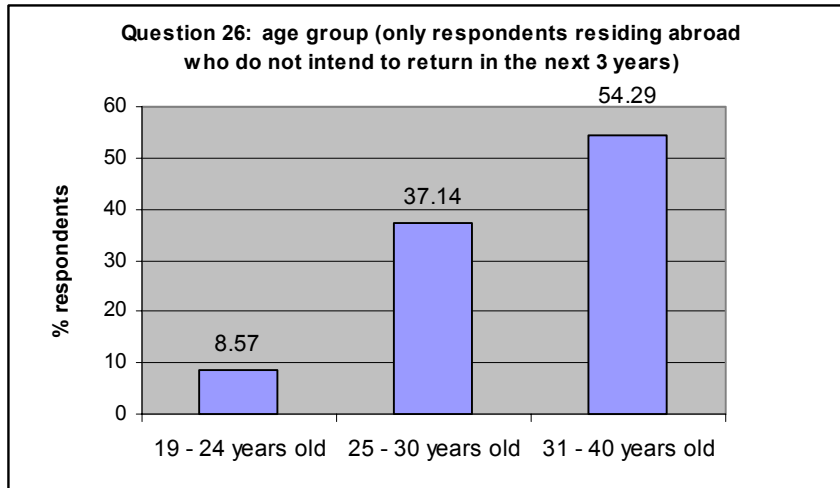
Figure 3: Age distribution of respondents who currently reside abroad



Respondents residing abroad were asked whether they intend to come back or not in the next three years. As we had expected, of those who do not intend to return, most are aged between 31-40 years old (54.29%). However those aged 25-30 years old also comprised a considerable portion (37.14%). A very small percentage of those who do not want to return are aged between 19-24 years old (8.57%).

Figure 4: Age distribution of respondents residing abroad who do not intend to return to Albania in the next 3 years





In terms of gender distribution our respondent group is almost uniformly distributed - 59% females and 41% males respectively (see fig. 5). Among those residing abroad 56 % are males and 44% are females (see fig 6).

Figure 5: Gender distribution of the surveyed population

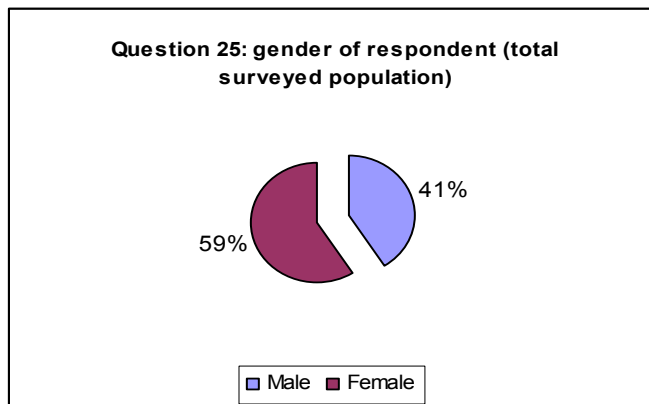
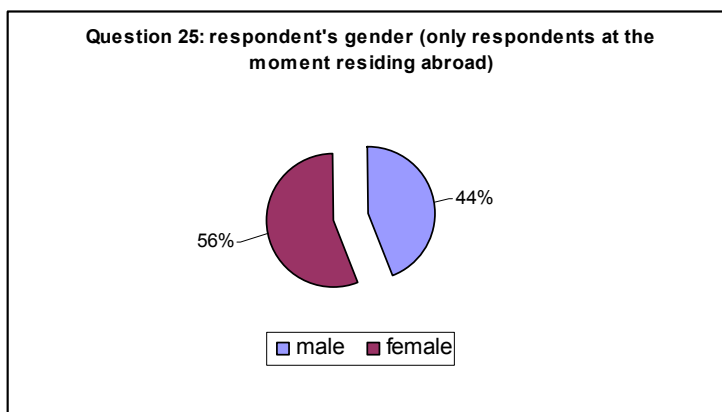
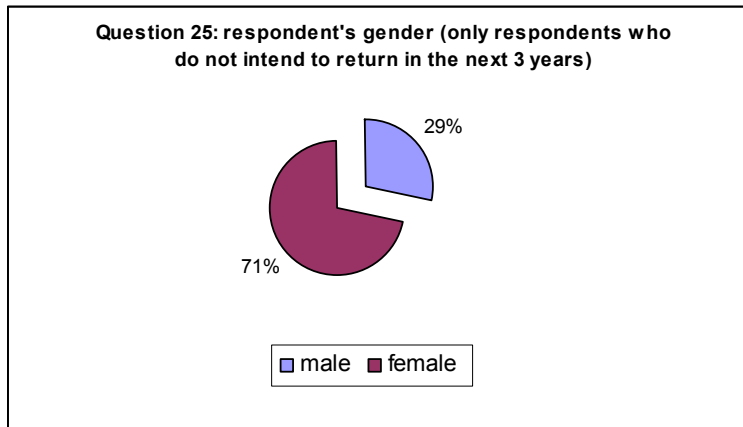


Figure 6: Gender distribution of respondents residing abroad



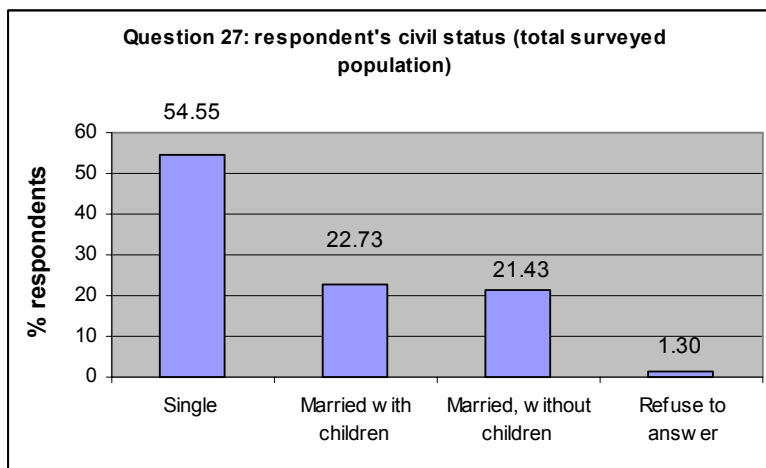
Also as can be seen from Figure 7, females appear to be less disposed to return home among our interviewed population (71%).

Figure 7: Gender distribution of respondents currently residing abroad with no intention to return in the next 3 years



Our surveyed population also came out relatively heterogeneous even in terms of civil status, with a majority 54.45% being single, and almost equal proportions of the categories “married, with children” and “married, without children”; respectively 22.73% and 21.43% (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: distribution of the surveyed population by civil status



Almost the same distribution is preserved even within the subgroups of “respondents residing abroad” and “respondents who do not intend to return in the next three years” (see Figures 9 and 10) apart from a slight increase of the proportion of those married, without children within the category of people who reside abroad and do not want to return.

Figure 9: distribution of respondents residing abroad by civil status

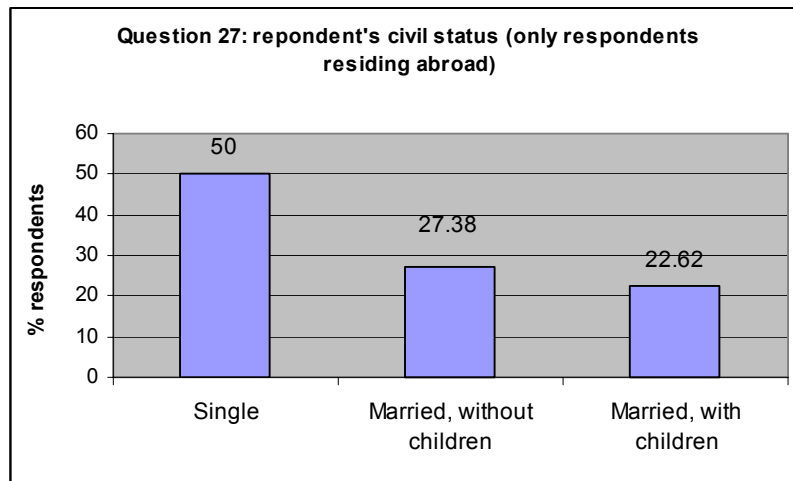
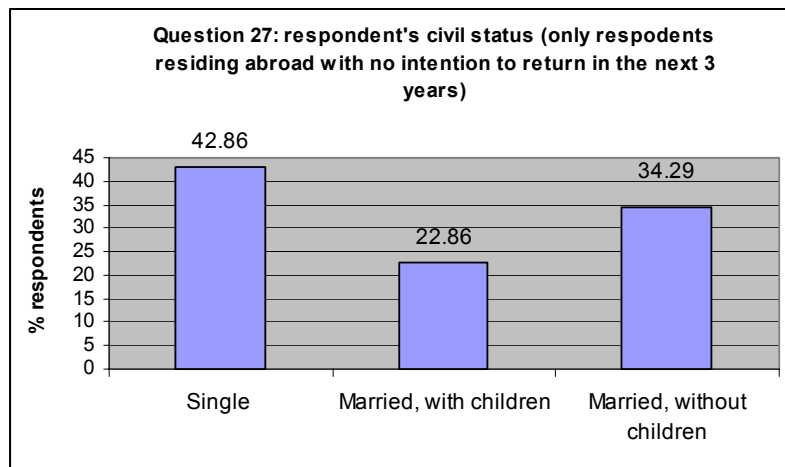


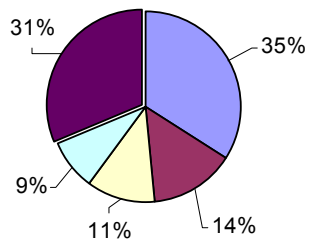
Figure 10: distribution by civil status of respondents residing abroad who do not intend to return in the next 3 years



Our respondents are spread over a wide range of geographical locations, most in the USA (35%), Italy, France and England (Figure 11) and a number of other countries we have included in the category of “other” as the numbers of respondents from each country was very small. However, if we compare this distribution with the 2001 OECD report on education providing statistical data of Albanian nationals being educated in foreign countries, our surveyed population is representative of the overall distribution of this community.

Figure 11: Geographical distribution of respondents residing abroad with no intention to come back in the next three years

**Geographical distribution of respondents who do not intend to come back in the next three years**



USA Italy France England Other

## ANNEX II. QUESTIONNAIRE

ALBANIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (AIIS)

Rr. "Dëshmorët e 4 Shkurtit", Nr. 7/1, Tiranë.

Tel: +355 4 248 853, Fax: + 355 4 270 337

E-mail: [aiis@aiis-albania.org](mailto:aiis@aiis-albania.org)

Website: [www.aiis-albania.org](http://www.aiis-albania.org)

Several studies suggest that the massive emigration of skilled labor from Albania could be turned into an important positive factor in the country's development if clear and effective strategies targeting the migrants are implemented. The Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) has undertaken a study of the characteristics of the "brain drain" phenomenon and potential strategies for making Albania an attractive career option for Foreign-educated Albanians. Through this survey, AIIS aims to utilize the opinions of students and academics that are part of this phenomenon in order to better focus the research and recommendations of the study. This questionnaire has been formulated by experts and affiliated researchers of AIIS.

We assure you that the information included here will be used ethically and your privacy will be guaranteed.

For any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the AIIS staff in the above address.

**Thank you for your time and cooperation.**

*Note: Make your choice with a "+" or "\*" in the empty slot next to the slot corresponding to the given code. Please read the italicized directions carefully before answering a question.*

<b>PART 1. THE QUESTIONS BELOW ARE DIRECTED TO RESPONDENTS THAT HAVE RETURNED TO ALBANIA UPON COMPLETION OF THEIR DEGREES ABROAD.</b>
---

1. Why did you decide to return to Albania?  
(**ONLY ONE ANSWER—THE MAIN REASON**)

It is easier to find work in Albania	1
It is easier to make a career in Albania	2
To be close to my family	3
I did not prefer living abroad	4
Couldn't get a residence permit in the country where I was living	5

Other (specify)\_\_\_\_\_ 6

2. Employment status:

Unemployed 1 (**GO TO QUESTION 7**)  
Employed full-time 2  
Employed part-time 3

3. Your employment status is regulated by:

An employment contract 1  
The black market 2  
I don't know/refuse to answer 3

4. You work as:

Civil servant in local/central government 1  
Elected official in local/central government 2  
Manager of a public company, institution or organization 3  
Manager in a private enterprise 4  
Skilled worker in the public sector (lawyer, engineer, dentist, artist, etc.) 5  
Skilled worker in the private sector (lawyer, engineer, dentist, artist, etc.) 6  
Free lance 7  
Employed in an international organization 8  
Employed in an local NGO 9  
Occasional irregular work 10  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ 11

5. Does your occupation match with your qualifications?

Yes 1  
No 2  
To some degree 3

6. How satisfied are you with the monthly income from your current occupation?  
Please evaluate in the following 1-5 scale where: **1** stands for highly dissatisfied and **5** stands for highly satisfied.

**(MARK THE FIGURE THAT MATCHES YOUR EVALUATION)**

Evaluation				
1	2	3	4	5

7. For how long did you remain jobless after coming back?

Found work as soon as I came back 1  
3-6 months 2  
6-12 months 3  
Other (specify)\_\_\_\_\_ 4

8. Problems you encountered while searching for a job:  
(**MORE THAN ONE ANSWER ALLOWED**)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| There was limited information about available job positions           | 1 |
| There were few available job positions that matched my qualifications | 2 |
| “Connections” were required   | 3 |
| Delays in the diploma recognition procedures                          | 4 |
| Was asked to pay a bribe  | 5 |
| Did not encounter any problem   | 6 |
| Other (specify) _____   | 7 |

9. Are you happy that you returned to Albania?

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Very happy         | 1 |
| Relatively happy   | 2 |
| Relatively unhappy | 3 |
| Not at all happy   | 4 |
| I don't know       | 5 |

<p><b>SECTION 2. QUESTIONS 10, 11, 12 ARE DIRECTED ONLY TO THOSE RESPONDENTS WHO ARE CURRENTLY RESIDING ABROAD</b></p>
--

10. Are you planning to return to Albania in the next 3 years?

- |       |                                |
|-------|--------------------------------|
| Yes   | 1                              |
| No    | 2 ( <b>GO TO QUESTION 12</b> ) |
| Maybe | 3                              |

11. If YES, what sector(s) would you like to work in?  
(**MORE THAN ANSWER ALLOWED**)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Public administration                       | 1 |
| Public institutions/enterprises             | 2 |
| Private sector                              | 3 |
| Non – profit sector                         | 4 |
| Academic institutions / research / teaching | 5 |
| Politics                                    | 6 |
| Other (specify) _____                       | 7 |

12. If NO: why?

(**MORE THAN ANSWER ALLOWED**)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Difficult to find a job in Albania            | 1 |
| Unattractive work ethics                      | 2 |
| Difficult to adapt to the Albanian life style | 3 |
| Low living standards                          | 4 |
| Have lost ties with Albania (familiar, etc.)  | 5 |
| Other (specify) _____                         | 6 |

**SECTION 3. THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE DIRECTIONED TO ALL RESPONDENTS**

13. In your opinion, does Albania offer sufficient opportunities for putting into practice your qualifications?

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Absolutely, yes | 1 |
| Little          | 2 |
| Not at all      | 3 |
| I don't know    | 4 |

14. In your opinion, which of the following statements about best describes the following employment sectors in Albania?

**(MARK FOR EACH SECTOR IN THE SLOT CORRESPONDING TO THE CODE OF THE STATEMENT YOU THINK IS A VALID DESCRIPTION FOR THAT SECTOR. MORE THAN ONE ANSWER IS ALLOWED).**

Description	Code	Public sector	Private sector	Non-profit sector
A developing sector	1			
Does not enjoy institutional autonomy	2			
Poor coordination/organization	3			
Inadequate infrastructure	4			
Poorly qualified employees	5			
Lacking work ethics	6			
Other (specify) _____	7			

15. In your opinion, it is easier to find a job in the:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Public sector          | 1 |
| Private sector         | 2 |
| Non-profit sector      | 3 |
| It makes no difference | 4 |
| I don't know           | 5 |

16. In your opinion, it is easier to find a job:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| with a degree attained from a foreign university   | 1 |
| with a degree attained from an Albanian university | 2 |
| It makes no difference                             | 3 |

17. In your opinion Albanian employers should:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Give more credits to foreign university degrees                                | 1 |
| Give more credits to foreign university degrees                                | 2 |
| Appraise educational degrees regardless of the country they were attained from | 3 |
| I don't know   | 4 |



18. Are you informed about the Albanian law for the recognition of foreign University diplomas?

- |     |                                |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| Yes | 1                              |
| No  | 2 ( <b>GO TO QUESTION 20</b> ) |

19. In your opinion, the criteria and procedures for the recognition of foreign University diplomas are:

**(MORE THAN ANSWER ALLOWED)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Valid and effective in preventing abuses                 | 1 |
| Valid but not effective in preventing abuses             | 2 |
| Unnecessary, bureaucratic and an obstacle to job seekers | 3 |
| I don't know   | 4 |

20. How do you get informed about daily developments in Albania?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| From various Media (newspapers, TV, internet, etc) | 1 |
| From web-sites of student associations             | 2 |
| From web-sites of state institutions               | 3 |
| From conversations with my friends                 | 4 |
| I do not regularly attend daily events             | 5 |
| Other (specify) _____                              | 6 |

21. Do you visit any web-sites of Albanian students abroad?

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Many           | 1 |
| Few            | 2 |
| None           | 3 |
| Don't know any | 4 |

22. Are you informed about the following initiatives for promoting the return of Albanian students?

**(MORE THAN ANSWER ALLOWED)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| The Program Fellowship of the SOROS Foundation      | 1 |
| The Project "Praktika" of the Public Administration | 2 |
| Other (specify) _____                               | 3 |
| Don't know any similar initiative                   | 4 |

23. In your opinion how efficient are these initiatives in promoting foreign university graduates to return home?

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Very efficient       | 1 |
| Relatively efficient | 2 |
| Little efficient     | 3 |
| Non efficient        | 4 |
| I don't know         | 5 |

24. Have you ever contacted Albanian diplomatic missions in the country you reside/used to reside?

Yes, they were helpful	1
Yes, they weren't helpful	2
Never had any contacts	3

<b>DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION</b>
--------------------------------

25. Gender:

Male	1
Female	2

26. Age-group

19 – 24 yrs old	1
25 – 30 yrs old	2
31 – 40 yrs old	3

27. Civil status:

Single	1
Married, with children	2
Married, without children	3
Refuse to answer	4

28. Country of residence:

State _____	
City _____	

29. Education:

**(WRITE DOWN FOR EACH OF THE DEGREES YOU HAVE COMPLETED)**

Education level	Branch	Graduation year	Country	Financing	
1. University				1. Scholarship from the Albanian state, 2. Scholarship from other state, 3. Family, 4. Self-financing	

2. Master				1. Scholarship from the Albanian state, 2. Scholarship from other state, 3. Family, 4. Self-financing	
3. PhD				1. Scholarship from the Albanian state, 2. Scholarship from other state, 3. Family, 4. Self-financing	

30. Knowledge of foreign languages:

English	1
French	2
Italian	3
German	4
Other (specify) _____	5

31. Wage level (in new leks):  
(**OPTIONAL**)

Below 25 000	1
25 000 – 39 000	2
40 000 – 59 000	3
60 000 – 79 000	4
80 000 – 100 000	5
Over 100 000	6

Thank you for your time and cooperation.